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ABSTRACT

Seal printing is explored as a literary topic in 28 works dating from the third millennium B.C. to A.D. 1613 (from Sumerian times through Shakespeare's). This ancient printing method is mentioned in the literature of the Egyptians, Greeks, Hebrews, and Arabians. It occurs in the works of Herodotus, Plutarch, and Marco Polo, as well as Chaucer and the compilers of "The Thousand Nights and a Night." Shakespeare, who mentions this type of printing 37 times in 13 plays, perpetuates an old tradition. (Author/AA)

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ANCIENT MEDIA IN LITERATURE:

GOLDEN PRINTERS AND GOLDEN AUTHORS

by

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"Writing is the mother of
eloquence and the father
of artists."
---Sumerian proverb[1]

Invention of micro- and macro-printing occurred through creation of five distinct mass communication media by an Armenoid stock inhabiting the geographical arc stretching from Mesopotamia, Armenia and Asia Minor through Crete, 4500-700 B.C., a cycle also siring the major literary genres. First, Subarian stamp seal printing, which later comprised signets, 4500 B.C. Second, Sumerian cylinder seal printing, 3500 B.C. Third, block printing of textiles in the Caucasus, 2000 B.C. Fourth, movable type printing which during Sumer's Third Dynasty of Ur at the 3d millennium's close likely included color and in Crete's Phaestos disk, 1700 B.C., did not. And fifth, Lydian creation of coinage, 700 B.C., which remains essentially stamp printing on metal.

Micro-printing embraced the stamp, cylinder and coin phyla, while macro-printing encompassed block and movable type. Though the two earliest media predate writing's invention by the Subarians in 3400 B.C. (subsequently elaborated by the Sumerians), the great authors of olden times and their audiences manifest such intimacy with these vehicles---particularly stamp, cylinder and coin---that the epoch's literature not only describes actual printing functions but also uses them as poetic symbols. Since the origins of engraving and scripts (i.e. mass communication media) are thus artistic, ancient printing's explicable link to literary contents provides recognition of an hitherto obscure legacy from yesteryear's finest literature.

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At minimum, the process immortalized by the Sumerians in their writings as kishib (printing by seal),[2] by the ra ("strike" or "roll")[3] method, also occurs in the poetry of the Egyptians, Armenians, Hittites, Greeks, Arabians and Hebrews. Even such later chroniclers as Herodotus, Plutarch and Marco Polo, as well as Chaucer and the romantic compilers of The Thousand Nights and a Night, incorporate it. And when Shakespeare cites humanity's oldest category of printing 37 times in 13 plays, the English bard simply perpetuates a venerable tradition.

The implications of printing surface in a host of literary works set down by scribes roughly since the mid-3d millennium, from which time the oldest extant versions descend. Likely earlier copies existed and doubtless harked back to eras of oral inspiration preceding the creation of writing. Thus, viewing the earliest mass communication media not solely as physical transmitters of information but as part of the very contents of that communication process, indicates that the ancient fame of printing had already become universal enough to transcend its basic technological role by entering the world of aesthetic expression.

At least 28 major works of poetry, tale and scripture contain citations on seal printing, by no means a complete list but rather a representative selection. The oldest comprise the Sumerian Dumuzi and Inanna Cycle, Transfer of the Arts of Civilization from Eridu to Uruk, Instructions of the Shuruppakian, Epic of Gilgamesh, and Hymn to Ninurta's Temple in Nippur; the Egyptian Book of the Dead and Trial of Horus and Seth; Homer's Iliad and Aeschylus' Agamemnon. Later citations include both biblical Testaments and the Koran; the Arabian Nights; Chaucer's Pardoner's and Wife of Bath prologues and Shakespeare's 3 King Henry VI, Titus Andronicus, Richard III, Midsummer Night's Dream, Romeo and Juliet, Merchant of Venice, I King Henry IV, Merry Wives of Windsor, Hamlet, Measure for Measure, Macbeth, Coriolanus, and King Henry VIII.

Since the Sumerians invented literature (no earlier Subarian poetry has yet surfaced), and as they also created cylinder seal printing and became strongly attached to this form at the expense of the Subarian-invented stamp seal, it is

altogether normal that when they speak of seals, the cylinder is inferred. Indeed this passion is so pervasive that wherever the cylinder is used, a direct or indirect Sumerian influence is involved. The Egyptians conversely discarded the cylinder, borrowed earlier from their Mesopotamian trading partners and actually designed for use on clay which is noticeably absent along the Nile, and resurrected from its temporary demise for purely pragmatic reasons the stamp which can also be impressed on papyrus. Their literature naturally abounds with the stamp though, interestingly enough, one of the characters in their hieroglyphic script is an illustration of a cylinder seal.

As heirs to the culture of Asia Minor, that conservative stamp bastion, the Greeks, like the earlier Egyptians, refer to it when writing of printing. The biblical situation is somewhat contradictory. Though steeped in the Mesopotamian tradition, the Old Testament is so recent that parts of it were recorded late enough to coincide with Hellenistic times, which witnessed the virtual disappearance of the cylinder method. And the Greco-Aramaic origins of the New Testament likewise argue for the stamp. The Arabians and west Europeans, obviously like the Hebrews too young for direct contact with Sumerians, refer solely to the stamp and signet (which is a variety of the stamp). However, most invocations to seal printing in the following works, whether cylinder or stamp, normally concern its legalistic function as finalization of a contract, oath or religious judgment. (All italics within quotations are the author's).

The Sumerians

The five* poetic creations here selected---the earliest appearance of the topic of printing in literary history---were recorded on clay tablets by

*Yet a sixth, Liturgy to Inanna as Mother Goddess, though minor, in bemoaning hard times, asks when that "which the engraver carved" and that "which the jeweller worked like a stone" will be restored? In addition to vases, engravers worked on seals whose finer examples ranked as jewels. Stephen Langdon, Sumerian Liturgical Texts (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania University Museum, X:2, 1917), pp. 185-186.

scribes from the Edubbas (universities in the various major cities) sometime during the last half of the 3d millennium B.C., though their mythological themes derive from prehistoric oral roots. This apex of cylinder seal printing coincided with the great dynastic age of the city-states of Uruk, Kish, Lagash and Umma, and the neo-Sumerian renaissance of the Third Dynasty of Ur.

The Divine Marriage of Dumuzi and Inanna:

Dumuzi and Inanna, also called Dumuzid and Innanak in old Sumerian but distorted to Tammuz and Ishtar by the later Akkadians, were god of fertility and goddess of love and war respectively. Written in the Emesal vernacular dialect, occasionally associated with women (as opposed to the literary Emeku dialect), the style suggests Inanna as narrator. Their otherwise stormy relationship was here serene. Dumuzi had journeyed to her residence to pay court with gifts and ask admittance, while her mother exhorted Inanna to allow him in, thereby agreeing to the nuptials. The strong-willed goddess opened the house to him after bathing and anointing herself with oil. Subsequently she gathered up her dowry and

> Arranged the lapis lazuli about her neck,
> Grasped her seal in her hand.[4]

Presumably, as befitted a high Sumerian lady, the cylinder seal protected her status and individuality since it could be used to print her identification mark on property. This instance of woman's equal rights---perhaps the first in literature and significantly enough symbolized by the ancient printing instrument---evidently did not upset Dumuzi because shortly thereafter, according to the poem,

> In the house she came to him like the light
> of the moon.[5]

Inanna and Enki: Transfer of the Arts of Civilization from Eridu to Uruk:

The deities, embodying the properties of the cosmos while simultaneously administering nature's laws, at times exhibited unfathomable personalities. But such remained the condition of existence, since the cosmos was not made for man

who instead had been created as the plaything of the gods. The latter could, and as mankind's experience readily verified, did insert good as well as bad ingredients into their recipe for civilization. The resulting formula thus comprised a mix of universal characteristics or elements, sometimes termed divine decrees or laws, each called a Me. A single cosmic component corresponded to a Me, which contained its own special set of regulations. The aggregate of all the Mes or components, Sumerian philosophy held, continued to sustain the universe since its very origins, and helped interprete reality to superfluous humanity. However inexplicable the formula, civilization required the Mes for nourishment just as surely as life craved food.

The list of Mes---68 of the more than 100 which survive in recognizable form to constitute the earliest instance of culture analysis---are on four occasions incorporated into the myth of Inanna, goddess of Uruk, and the wisdom god, Enki of Eridu. The latter city remained Sumer's oldest center of culture because Enki, who resided there, had been entrusted by the pantheon with all the Mes required for civilization, four of which mentioned in the poem directly underlie seal printing:

> No. 6, the royal insignia, the heraldic emblem deriving from the logotypes engraved on the earlier stamp seals which not only symbolized but instantly communicated the identification of its owner to the masses.
>
> No. 42, the art of metalworking, that profession which, as certain seals were copper, gold and silver, provided some know-how for their manufacture.
>
> No. 47, scribeship, the profession that not only invented, preserved and taught writing but streamlined scripts and created the designs and signatures which appeared on seals.
>
> No. 48, craft of the smith, the trade somewhat related to metalworking but also including fabrication of seals in other materials.

To stimulate the progressiveness of her beloved city, Inanna, through a strategem, got Enki drunk and extracted from him as a gift the Mes which she piled aboard her Euphrates Boat of Heaven and sailed off to Uruk. Upon sobering, Enki seven times failed to stop the journey. Ultimately, the cheering

Urukians welcomed their goddess home where she carefully unloaded the Mes, including the four relating to seal printing.[6]

Instructions of the Shuruppakian:

The earliest known story of the flood appears in poems dealing with an actual local disaster which may have occurred sometime between 2900-2700 B.C., primarily around the Sumerian city of Shuruppak hard by the Euphrates, though the authors refer to far earlier times. The flood hero who achieves immortality is known variously as Ubartutu ("Friend of the god Tutu") and Ziusudra ("Life of long days"), and later receives the name of his city, Shuruppak,[7] though this likely means "man of Shuruppak" or the Shuruppakian (another explanation is that the city symbolically is instructing one of its prominent sons).

A didactic poem refering to printing centers around the advice of Shuruppak, either denoting the city's alleged namesake or meaning Shuruppakian as previously mentioned, to his son Ziusudra. The axiomatic counsels hail from at least 2500 B.C. and normally were prefaced by the traditional Sumerian introduction, "On a faraway day, on a faraway night, in a faraway time." The relevant precept reads:

> My son, it if be the wish of a ruler that you belong
> to him,
> If you are entrusted with his closely guarded seal
> Open his treasure house and enter it,
> For no one but you may do it.[8]

Epic of Gilgamesh:

The oldest versions of the world's first epic date from the renaissance age of the Third Dynasty of Ur toward the end of the 3d millenium B.C., when its monarchs bore the title, "King of the Four Quarters of the World." This dominion founded by Urnammu in 2113 B.C. and elaborated upon by his equally energetic descendants Shulgi, Amarsuen and Shusuen until its fall under Ibbisuen in 2006 B.C. to the Elamites, witnessed history's first bureaucratic national state, earliest code of law and the largest empire yet forged. Sumer extended from Armenia to the gulf, from Elam to the Mediterranean during this

107-year period which increasingly appears destined to exceed Periclean Greece and Renaissance Italy in terms of world importance.

There can be little doubt that earlier recorded versions existed. Yet even before writing's advent in 3400 B.C., the Nar, a bard or wandering musical poet of the people, gathered folklore, composed ballads and verse and sang them to the accompaniment of stringed instruments, the lyre in particular. No region, from the smallest community to the mightiest city-state, lacked Nars who, throughout the ages when writing remained in full flower, continued their basic role in the preservation and expansion of Sumer's oldest and richest literary heritage, including the Epic of Gilgamesh. Some Nars, patronized by various courts, provided the living link between the wealthy ancient oral tradition---proverb, tale, epic---and the recorded national literature affecting the reigns and adventures of royal heroes which they transmitted to the scribes. Not surprisingly, therefore, the Sumerian list of Mes, those divine attributes believed to have sustained the universe since its origins, ranks music (specifically No. 32) and musical instruments (Nos. 31 and 65-68)---six in all---among them.[9]

The epic concerns the cosmic travails of a King of Uruk city-state who actually reigned sometime between 2700 and 2650 B.C., well into the era of the cylinder. Gilgamesh was the fifth of 12 Kings of the First Dynasty of Uruk, founded in 2750 B.C. by Meskiaggasher and continued down to his own time by Enmerkar, Lugalbanda and Dumuzi. Significantly, all of these first five Kings eventually figure in Sumerian mythology, indicating real-life accomplishments momentous enough to inspire their further glorification. Early Urukian and subsequently other Sumerian rulers bore the title En ("lord") and as head priest of the city god directed the temple which had served as the urban nucleus since prehistoric times. They became Ensi ("governor") as Uruk expanded into a city-state and Lugal ("king") upon its absorption of other city-states. In Sumerian, Ensi equals the ideogram Patesi, meaning "the chief (pa) who delimits (si) the

temple precinct (te)." Lugal means "great (gal) man (lu)."[10] An Ensi was a Lugal's vassal.

The Sumerian King List (Namlugal[11] in Sumerian)* describes Meskiaggasher as the son of the sun-god Utu who "went into the sea and came out from it to the mountains,"[12] likely meaning that he ruled as a brazen imperialist from the Zagros to the Mediterranean, thereby temporal master of the territory covered during the daily trek of Utu when the sun dips into the Great Western Sea, progresses beneath the earth throughout the night, then ultimately emerges in all his grandeur from the pure mountains each morning for all the world to see. The "cycle" of Enmerkar primarily treats the Urukian hero's relations with the ruler of Aratta, a highland region at the south end of Armenia's Lake Urmia and perhaps the original home of the Sumerians themselves. So widespread became Enmerkar's reputation that the Namlugal credits him with having built Uruk. The Lugalbanda "cycle" likewise concerns Uruk's dealings with Aratta city-state, and its hero is termed both divine and a shepherd. Dumuzi became an underworld god linked to vegetation and livestock (though the Namlugal curiously refers to two divine Dumuzis, an antediluvian shepherd and a postdiluvian fisherman),[13] and in concert with the love goddess Inanna assured fertility to Uruk. Royal couples gradually represented human doubles of the divine couple to which the city-state belonged. But rendering all predecessors insignificant in comparison was Gilgamesh,**destined to become the

*The Namlugal, all versions deriving from one written in the time of Utuhegal, Lugal of Uruk, 2120-2114 B.C., constitutes a sequence of dynasties of the various city-states, names and regnal span (some fabulous) of the Lugals and commentaries on their signal accomplishments. After defeating the Guti, Utuhegal was ordained at Sumer's religious capital, Nippur, as "King of the Four Regions," and proceeded to centralize the country by subordinating the Ensis of the other city-states. One such Ensi, Urnemmu of Ur, subsequently became an independent sovereign, 2113-2096 B.C., confirming the Third Dynasty and thereby supplanting Urukian hegemony with that of the Urians. Shortly after Ur's eclipse by the Elamites, the Namlugal was extended down to 1950 B.C. by the dynasty of Isin.

**The complete name of Gilgamesh may have been Pagishgemesh, meaning "man who is germ of a new tree" or in essence "man who is to become originator of a family." (Jacobsen, The Sumerian King List, pp. 188-189). Such might relate to common Caucasian folklore---Subarians, Elamites, Sumerians, Hurrians and Armenians even engraved insignias of cosmic trees on printing seals---which attributed evolutionary factors of creation and fertility to a Tree-of-Life motif, subsequently expounded in literature and art. For an earlier attempt at reconstructing the name to mean, "the first god (Gibil) is a commander," see Stephen Langdon, trans., The Epic of Gilgamesh (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania University Museum, X:3, 1917), p. 208.

greatest name in the history of the ancient Near East.

In treating the exploits of Uruk's most renowned Lugal, the Epic of Gilgamesh at times reflects the jarring displacement of mountain nomadic freedom with sophisticated urbanization. Universal questions of love, nostalgia, fate, immortality and lack of it figure prominently, while concepts of paradise, creation of the universe, fall of man, the flood and babel cosmology are jointly expressed for the first time in all literature.

The Gilgameshian age not only witnessed the accumulation of enough property to heighten the need for seal printing, but inaugurated seige warfare among the cities. The latter obviously aggravated the stability of property, both public and personal, and the resulting anxiety likely fueled the demand for more seals. As son of the goddess Ninsun and of an En of Uruk's Kullab district, Gilgamesh was in an admirable position to use his power to build the fortifications of his city, especially its mighty outer wall defenses. The subsequent attack by Agga, Lugal of Kish city-state which housed the first dynasty in the Subaro-Sumerian perimeter after the flood, was not only repulsed by the Urukian champion but resulted in the latter's conquest of Kish.

In an early episode Gilgamesh, troubled by the knowledge that all eventually die, resolves to "immortalize" himself among mankind by acquiring enough fame to live on after him. Accompanied by his friend Enkidu and their retainers, the champion crosses seven mountains to reach Subartu's "Land of the Living," under jurisdiction of the sun-god Utu and guarded by the monster Huwawa (Humbaba), there to fell its rare trees. The latter, apparently a demon from the Subaro-Hurrian mythic cycles of Armenia, becomes aroused and subsequently dies in a confrontation with the Urukians. The angered wind-god Enlil, who loved Huwawa, thereupon complicates their lives. Stamp printing, herein crucial to the technical procedure of erecting Gilgamesh's name (i.e. fame) for all to see, is twice cited in this Subarian adventure. First:

> The lord set his mind toward the "Land of the Living,"
> The lord Gilgamesh set his mind toward the "Land of the Living,"
> He says to his servant Enkudu:

"Enkidu, brick and stamp have not yet brought forth the fated end,
I would enter the 'land,' would set up my name,
In its places where names have been raised up, I would raise up my name,
In its places where names have not been raised up, I would raise up the names of the gods."[14]

And soon comes a second mention of the stamp when Gilgamesh calls out to the sun-god:

"Utu, a word I would speak to you, to my word your ear!
I would have it reach you, give ear to it!
In my city man dies, oppressed is the heart,
Man perishes, heavy is the heart,
I peered over the wall,
Saw the dead bodies floating in the river's waters,
As for me, I too will be served thus, verily it is so!
Man, the tallest, cannot reach to heaven,
Man, the widest, cannot cover the earth.
Brick and stamp have not yet brought forth the fated end,
I would enter the 'land,' would set up my name,
In its places where the names have been raised up, I would raise up my name,
In its places where the names have not been raised up, I would raise up the names of the gods."[15]

When the hero's beloved friend Enkidu is killed by the bull of heaven---unleashed by the angered Inanna upon Gilgamesh's refusal to entertain her advances---the Urukian Lugal orders craftsmen to fashion various artifacts (presumably among them symbolic seals) to commemorate his fallen comrade:

Then Gilgamesh issued a call to the land: "O smith,
Coppersmith, goldsmith, engraver! Make my friend
...!"[16]

Later while seeking immortality, the champion engages Urshanabi, the skipper who daily sails across the sea of death which separates the garden of the sun from paradise. Subsequently, Gilgamesh converses with the only human favored by the gods with ever-lasting life: the wise former Lugal of Shuruppak city-state, Ziusudra (from whom the Old Testament Noah derives). Earlier, Enki, the main deity of yet another city-state---Eridu---and famed as god of the wisdom-fashioning sweet waters and among humanity's creators, had saved the lovable Shuruppakian, his family and "the seed of all living creatures" from the flood. Consequently, the gods gave Ziusudra the title "Faraway,"

and allowed him to live forever at "the mouth of the rivers" or the Dilmunian paradise of the rising sun.

"O father Utnapishtim (Ziusudra)," implores Gilgamesh, "you who have entered the assembly of the gods, I wish to question you concerning the living and the dead, how shall I find the life for which I am searching?"

The allegorical response dampens the Lugal's hopes: "There is no permanence. Do we build a house to stand forever, do we seal a contract to hold for all time?"[17]

This mention of cylinder printing became widely circulated since the Sumerian masterpiece, translated into Subarian, Hurrian, Hittite, Babylonian and Assyrian editions, ultimately influenced the works of other lands including the Greek cycles of Herakles and Odysseus and particularly Genesis.

Hymn to Ninurta's Temple in Nippur:

One of many hymns possibly compiled by Enheduanna ("lord, the ornament of heaven"), a high or en-priestess of the moon-god Nanna of Ur, the song to Ninurta, god of war, lauds his shrine in Nippur, the holy city of Sumer. The script dates from the Third Dynasty of Ur (2113-2006 B.C.) and occasionally terms her "the en-priestess chosen for the pure divine decrees (Mes)."[18] Likely all works ascribed to Enheduanna were composed by Sumerian scribes: antiquity is replete with royalty claiming credit for the creations of their underlings. Nonetheless the daughter of Sargon, whose writing style probably derived from her Sumerian mother, remains the earliest known author in world literary history.[19] The Ninurta hymn begins:

> House with the gathered Mes of heaven
> standing on a great place,

followed by numerous praises of the greatness of the structure, its builders and surroundings, then continues:

> The great ensi of Enlil, the sovereign
> who rivals heaven and earth,
> The sealkeeper of father Enlil, he
> who make the great Mes perfect.[20]

Keeper-of-the-seal, called Kishibgal in Sumerian, was a high position not only in the royal courts on the banks of the Tigris-Euphrates but also of the later Pharaohs. Other Sumerian temple hymns alluding to printing in the collection speak of "the stylus hanging at the sides, the insignia of clerkship;" "Haja, lord of the seal of Enlil;" and "you Nisaba are Enlil's sealkeeper."[21]

The Egyptians

Nilotic literature often involves religious themes: usually rituals for perfecting the after-life or special narratives gingerly explaining the creation and characteristics of the deities. That printing played a major role in such thought is supported by the two following series of references to the stamp seal.

Book of the Dead:

This religious work mainly concerns the easing of trials faced by the deceased in the crucial trip to the Egyptian after-life. For protection from enemies wishing to hinder the journey, the deceased present oral prescriptions to incorporeal gods, and prayers and hymns to the great gods so they will allow him to prevail over his foes. It further contains confessions of the deceased to the 42 assessors, the weighing of the heart in the Osirian judgment hall, plans of the mummy chamber and disposition of funeral furniture in it. Sometimes excerpts from the work were inscribed on the mummy bandages, amulets and scarabs, beetle-shaped stamp seals. Eventually the tradition-bound Amen (Amon) priests so popularized the salvation ritual that tomb walls depict formal scenes from the composition. Reference to stamp seal printing occurs 117 times in hieroglyphic hymns and religious texts of the Theban recension of the Book of the Dead, the three-tome corpus employed in Egyptian funerals.*

*The 117 stamp seal citations from the Theban Recension comprise five in Volume I (iii:1,3; iv:2; vii:2; xi:1); 82 in Volume II (xxi:1; xxv:1; xxviii:1; xxxA:1; xxxi:1; xxxiii:1; xxxv:1; xxxvi:1; xxxvii:1; xxxviiiB:1; xlvii:1; lB:1; lii:1; liii:1; liv:2; lvi:2; lvii:1; lxiiiA:2; lxiiiB:1; lxiv:2; lxvA:1; lxvii:1; lxviii:2; lxxiv:2; lxxv:1; lxxvi:2; lxxvii:1; lxxviii:1; lxxix:1; lxxxiA:1; lxxxiii:2; lxxxiv:1; lxxxv:1; lxxxvi:1; lxxxvii:1; lxxxviii:1; xciii:1; xciv:2; xcv:1; xcvi and xcvii:1; xcviii:1; xcix:2; c and cxxix:2; cii:2; ciii:1; cv:1; cvi:1; cviii:2; cix:2; cxii:1; cxiii:1; cxv:1; cxvi:1; cxvii:1; cxviii:1; cxix:1; cxii:1; cxxiii or cxxxix:1; cxxiv:2; cxxv:1 and vignette text 1; cxxvi:1; cxxx:2,4,6,7,8,9,15,18,21,28; cxxxi:1,2; cxxxiii:2,8,9,16; cxxxiv:1,3,5,12); and 30 in Volume III (cxxxviA(I):1; cxxxviA(II):1; cxxxviB:2; cxxxviiA:3,4,13,17, 22,44,48,51; cxxxviii:1; cxli and cxlii:1; cxliv:2,13; cxlvi:1; cxlviii:1; cxlix:1; cliii:1; cliiiA:1; cliiiB:1, clix:1; clv:1; clvi:1; clxxvi:1; clxxix:2; clxxxvii:1; clxxxviii:2; clxxxix:2,28). All excerpts are from E.A. Wallis Budge, The Book of the Dead (New York: Causeway Books, 1974).

Allegedly three other recensions existed: one in hieroglyphics from the Old, First Intermediate and Middle Kingdoms (Dynasties III-XII); another somewhat similar to the Theban and compiled near the onset of the Late New Kingdom's Dynasty XXI; and lastly in both hieroglyphic and hieratic scripts from the eras of the Saite (Dynasty XXVI) and Ptolomies. Only the recension of Thebes, however, remains above suspicion.

Scribes compiled this magnum opus of their national literature from 1600-900 B.C., coinciding with the end of the Second Intermediate, the entire New Kingdom and the beginning of the Late New Kingdom dynasties, though some material may obtain from earlier sources.

Tradition holds that Chapter lxiv, for example, hails from the reign of Udimu, also called Wedynu or Khasety, fifth Pharaoh (the Egyptian royal title derives from per āa, meaning "great house") of Dynasty I, c. 2700 B.C. If true, the attribution must be oral in the sense that certain Gilgamesh elements likewise emanate form verbal sources of greater antiquity. Actually, the bulk of the Book of the Dead, at first written on linen shrouds and only later on papyrus rolls, was recorded in the 12th century B.C. at the close of Dynasty XIX and start of Dynasty XX, a period which corresponds with the fall of Troy.

Occasional unevenness in the Theban recension doubtless results from the fact that its compilers endured rather feverish times. The foreign Hurrian Hyksos (the word actually denotes "rulers of mountainlands" or mountaineers rather than "shepherd kings"),[22] who ruled as Pharaohs of Dynasties XV and XVI---c. 1750-1580 B.C.---had declined in power, though not before inaugurating the earliest compilations of the work. But Thutmose III's empire, 1490-1436 B.C., barely survived him when confronted by the growing might of the Hurrian Mitanni and Hittite empires. Additionally, Egypt's conservative theology was severely tested during the reign, 1378-1362 B.C., of the revolutionary monotheist Amenhotep IV (himself partly of Hurrian extraction), who took the name Akhenaten (Ikhnaton), and his illustrious queen, Nefertiti, possibly also of Hurrian descent,

who it now appears may actually have inspired this first monotheist religion in world history. And by the 10th century B.C., the weakening realm came under control of Libyans.

Possibly these calamities magnified the need for other-worldliness on the part of the dissolutioned in order to squelch unpleasant earthly realities. For whereas the Sumerians had perfected writing for economic, secular purposes, the Egyptians, as shown in their Book of the Dead, increasingly utilized it for religious causes---funeral prescriptions, incantations, magical formulas. In it stamp seal printing is invariably identified with Nu, the sky god, also termed the heavenly waterman, whose standard appellation becomes repetitive. "The overseer of the house of the overseer of the seal, Nu, triumphant." Numerous excerpts relating to seal printing from the recension apparently attempt to provide the physical requisites---mouth (speech) and air (life)---needed for the underworld ordeal:

> The chapter of giving a mouth to the overseer of the house of the overseer of the seal, Nu, triumphant, in the underworld. (II:xxi (II:xxi:1-2).

> The chapter of giving air to the overseer of the house of the overseer of the seal, Nu, triumphant, in the underworld. (II:liv:1-2).

Still others concern the spiritual purification demanded in the judgment hall, the gift of knowledge, and also pose equation-like definitions which reveal Nu's varied attributes:

> The following shall be said when the overseer of the house of the overseer of the seal, Nu, triumphant, cometh forth into the Hall of Double Maati so that he may be separated from every sin which he hath done and may behold the faces of the gods. The Osiris Nu, triumphant. (II:cxxv:1-2).

> Shall not I make the overseer of the house of the overseer of the seal, Nu, triumphant, to know life? (III:clxxxix:28).

> The Osiris Nu, the overseer of the house of the overseer of the seal, is a hawk, the transformations of which are mighty. (II:cxxxiii:16).

Yet perhaps most interesting are those excerpts underscoring the continuing victory of the status quo-geared Amen priests over those of Aten, who briefly

seized the religious initiative through anti-Amen tenets enacted during the short monarchy of Akhenaten, proof of the conservative force of the Book of the Dead and its cordiality toward Amen:

> The chapter of beating back the crocodile that cometh to carry away the charm from Nu, the overseer of the house of the overseer of the seal, triumphant, the son of the overseer of the house, Amen-hetep, triumphant, in the underworld. (II:xxxi:1).
>
> The chapter of making the transformation into a lotus. The overseer of the house of the overseer of the seal, Nu, begotten by the overseer of the house of the overseer of the seal, Amen-hetep. (II:lxxxiA:1).
>
> Here beginneth the book which man shall recite for his father or for his son during the festivals of Amentet, whereby he shall make him perfect with Ra and with the gods, and whereby he shall have his existence with them; it shall be recited on the ninth day of the festival. Behold the Osiris Nu, the overseer of the house of the overseer of the seal, triumphant, maketh offerings of cakes, and ale, and oxen, and feathered fowl, and joints of roast meat; and he burneth incense. (III:cxli and cxlii:1).

While acknowledging the older admonition of Ziusudra to Gilgamesh that there is no physical permanence, the ancients, particularly of the Subaro-Sumerian school, viewed printing in a special light. So long as it remained unbroken, the seal, whether stamp or cylinder, denoted psychological permanence and reflected the status of authority in both secular and religious realms. The latter may explain its frequent mention in the Egyptian work, which symbolized the seal as the ultimate arbitor in the sphere of final judgment, a pronouncement of deep concern to the immortality-oriented Egyptians.

Trial of Horus and Seth:

As with the Sumerians, it is likely that some at least of the Egyptian gods had once been actual kings whose stellar feats as depicted by hired scribes (an excellent "press agentry") or the tendency to exaggerate the past as a golden age, led to their eventual deification. Such seems to apply to Osiris who, prior to the union of north and south Egypt, may have been king, then later god of the Busiris centered northern province (ultimately he became associated with Abydos and chief god in the eastern Delta). Subsequently he ruled the world kindly, elevating humanity from barbarism to civilization.

Soon however his jealous brother Seth murdered him, cut up his body in more than a dozen segments and tossed them all over Egypt. Isis, the wife of Osiris and pregnant with Horus, eventually restored her husband who became king of the region of the dead (the Osirian cult became central to the embalmment process of mummification). Though Seth plucked out one of the eyes of the avenging Horus in battle, the son of Osiris won his father's throne by final judgment of the court of the gods, regained his eye (which forevermore symbolized sacrifice) and became the standard of family loyalty.[23] The trial by the Heliopolitan gods to decide the legitimate successor to Osiris' office herein mentions seal printing. The chief judge, the sun-god Re-harakhty, is pro-Seth and moves the trial to Center Island, ordering the ferryman Anty not to allow any woman across, thus banning the anti-Seth Isis:

> Then Isis came along and went up to Anty the ferryman as he was sitting beside the boat, (now she had changed herself into an old woman who walked with a limp, with a small gold seal in her hand)...

Anty finally asked what gift he could expect to ferry her across:

> Then she said to him: 'I will give you the gold seal in my hand.' He said to her: 'Give me the gold seal, and she gave it to him.' Then he took her across to Center Island, and she walked away under the trees.[24]

And Horus later won his case, while the stubborn Re-harakhty adopted Seth who became the god of fear-inducing thunder.

The Greeks

The story of the Trojan War, from which the works of Homer and many Greek plays derive, supports the contention that much literature and myth contain at minimum tinges of actuality. Schliemann's finds not only verified Ilion's existence, but discoveries by later archaeologists confirm that the site of Troy had at least seven levels, the oldest dating from c. 2800 B.C. Stripped of poetic trappings, the conflagration itself likely occurred sometime between 1334-1150 B.C., as hungry barbarians smashed across that part of the Asia Minor coast corresponding to the Troad, which had developed the lucrative Aegean trade.

The Iliad:*

The tumultuous period coincided with the "Peoples of the Sea" migration (Troy's pillagers may have been its western fringe), a movement of Caucasian and Aryan tribes which destroyed the Hittite and Minoan realms and as the Philistines established Palestine and even invaded Egypt where their momentum seems to have stopped. Homer probably lived in the 8th century B.C. and the oldest specific version of his Iliad was likely edited in Athens during the Peisistratos tyranny, 560-528 B.C., though some would favor an earlier date.

At any rate, the entire era from the origins of Troy in the early 3d millennium to the mid-1st millennium B.C. Iliad redaction, saw wide distribution of stamp seals from their Subarian home to Asia Minor in particular, which became clogged with the miniature devices. Homer perpetuates the venerable tradition of printing as the inherent symbol of honor-bound, legal authority and thereby continues in the train of the Subaro-Sumerians. The Asia Minor Greek four times speaks of the seal which here must be equated with the stamp rather than the cylinder variety, as the Greeks were heavily influenced by Asia Minor, perhaps the staunchest outpost of stamp seal printing in the ancient world.

Trojans and Greeks were neither strangers nor always enemies. Indeed, Greek history and myth are so often entwined with that of Asia Minor as to become virtually indistinguishable. Civilization's first flashes came to the Achaians from that direction and Homer merely reflects its obvious influence on his fellow countrymen. Even the ancestors of the Greek leaders against Troy ultimately came from Asia Minor: the house of Atreus, whose most prominent sons were the kings, Agamemnon and Menelaos, descended from the house of Pelops, that Phrygian dynasty after whom the Peloponnesus ("islands of Pelops") are named. And Assuwa, a westernmost Hittite principality with which the Greeks became familiar during their eastern trek, may have given its name to the world's largest continent.

*All quotations are from Richard Latimore, trans., The Iliad of Homer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

In Book III of the Iliad, Homer has Menelaos announce:

> 'Listen now to me also; since beyond all others this sorrow
> comes closest to my heart, and I think the Argives and Trojans
> can go free of each other at last. You have suffered much evil
> for the sake of this my quarrel since Alexandros began it.
> As for that one of us two to whom death and doom are given,
> let him die: the rest of you be made friends with each other.
> Bring two lambs: let one be white and the other black for
> Earth and the Sun God, and for Zeus we will bring yet another.
> Bring, that he may seal the pledges, the strength of Priam:
> Priam himself, for his sons are outrageous, not to be trusted:
> lest some man overstep Zeus' oaths, and make them be nothing.
> Alway it is, that the hearts in the younger men are frivolous,
> but when an elder man is among them, he looks behind him
> and in front, so that all comes out far better for both sides.'
> (III:97-110).

The husband of Helen, taking pity on the many innocents from both sides who have perished because of his dispute with Alexandros (Paris), is here suggesting that he and his wife's seducer meet in battle alone to settle the issue, thereby preventing further carnage so that Greeks and Trojans may renew their friendship. The Homeric Achaians, borrowing a page from the Mesopotamian experience, are shown as accustomed to using seal printing for one of its traditional purposes, the legalization of an oath or pledge. In the same book soon thereafter, Homer relates the Trojan acceptance of the plan of Menelaos. Symbols of a pact---two young rams, a wine-filled goatskin sack, a mixing bowl and gold wine cups---are brought to Priam's palace. Once again the seal is considered an integral part of an oath, as the herald Idaios converses with the Trojan king:

> Standing beside the aged man he spoke words to arouse him:
> 'Son of Laomedon, rise up: you are called by the chief men
> of Trojans, breakers of horses, and bronze-armoured Achaians
> to come down into the plain that you may seal the oaths pledged.
> For warlike Menelaos and Alexandros are to fight
> with long spears against each other for the sake of the woman.
> Let the woman go to the winner, and all the possessions.
> Let the rest of them, cutting their oaths of faith and friendship,
> dwell, we in Troy where the soil is rich, while those others return home
> to horse-pasturing Argos and Achaia the land of fair women.'
> (III:249-258).

Alexandros fares poorly in the subsequent battle and is rescued from Athena-aided Menelaos at the last moment by Aphrodite, whose favorite he has remained

ever since the judgment of Paris, the ultimate inspiration for the Trojan War. By now the situation has degenerated into what might corroborate the ancient Sumerian definition of mankind's role on earth: to be the plaything of the gods. Athena, angered by her father Zeus' statement that he loves the city of Ilion above all others, devises a plot on Book IV to renew the hostilities by tricking the Trojan Pandaros to kill Menelaos with an arrow. The act fails to kill the Greek king but succeeds in re-igniting the hostilities:

> ...Agamemnon
> the powerful spoke to them, groaning heavily, and by the hand held
> Menelaos, while their companions were mourning beside them:
> 'Dear brother, it was your death I sealed in the oaths of friendship,
> setting you alone before the Achaians to fight with the Trojans.
> So, the Trojans have struck you down and trampled on the oaths sworm.
> Still the oaths and the blood of the lambs shall not be called vain,
> the unmixed wine poured and the right hands we trusted.
> If the Olympian at once has not finished this matter,
> late will he bring it to pass, and they must pay a great penalty,
> with their own heads, and with their women, and with their children.
> For I know this thing well in my heart, and my mind knows it.
> There will come a day when sacred Ilion shall perish,
> and Priam, and the people of Priam of the strong ash spear,
> and Zeus son of Kronos who sits on high, the sky-dwelling,
> himself shall shake the gloom of his aegis over all of them
> in anger for this deception. All this shall not go unaccomplished.'
> (IV:152-168).

One suspects that warring armies, at least during the Bronze Age period of the Iliad, like their earlier counterparts in Mesopotamia, Egypt and Hatti, carried along seals for use in the areas of supply, rations and military orders. Additionally, the military nobility frequently wore signet rings with which to stamp legal impressions on letters and other official documents usually made of clay. The seals used by Greeks and Trojans may well have included both signet rings, manufactured from rare stones and metals, and individual stamp seals. Even the deities alluded to seal printing. For the fourth and last time Homer invokes the stamp when the goddess Hera, protector of the Greeks and dismayed at Zeus' sheltering of Ilion, ultimately devises an amorous gambit to make him forget Troy, wherein

> ...she might be able to drift an innocent
> warm sleep across his eyelids, and seal his crafty perceptions.
> (XIV:164-165).

Agamemnon:*

This first play in Aeschylus' trilogy, Oresteia---the others being The Choephori and The Eumenides---was written in 485 B.C. and like the Iliad before it springs from the Trojan War cycles. Son of Atreus, brother of Menelaos and prime Greek king, Agamemnon is about to return home from the battles, the costly quarrel with Achilleus forgotten and the war consummated. His wife Clytemnestra, loyal while he was away much like Penelope in the Odyssey, uses the concept of stamp printing to emphasize that all remains just as intact as the day he departed for Troy:

> Remains to think what honour best may greet
> My lord, the majesty of Argos, home.
> What day beams fairer on a woman's eyes
> Than this, whereon she flings the portal wide,
> To hail her lord, heaven-shielded, home from war?
> This to my husband, that he tarry not,
> But turn the city's longing into joy!
> Yea, let him come, and coming may he find
> A wife no other than he left her, true
> And faithful as a watch-dog to his home,
> His foeman's foe, in all her duties leal,
> Trusty to keep for ten long years unmarred
> The store whereon he set his master-seal
> Be steel deep-dyed, before ye look to see
> Ill joy, ill fame, from other wight, in me!
> (603-617)

Old Testament**

While the initial writings of certain Old Testament books may derive from about 600 B.C., the earliest relatively whole and extant Hebrew recension dates from the 11th century A.D.,[25] though the Dead Sea scroll finds at Qumrun, 1947-1952, emanate from the era just prior to the Christian period. The total of eight allusions to seal printing in the Old Testament consist of two in Genesis, three in Exodus, and one in Job.

Book of Genesis:

The oldest extant copies comprise Dead Sea fragments from the 2d century B.C., and the 4th century A.D. Sinaiticus and Vaticanus codices apparently

*Excerpt is from Whitney J. Oates and Eugene O'Neill, Jr. (New York: Random House, 1938), Vol. I.

**All quotations are from The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1953).

derive from three separate strains: the "J" and the "E" which use "Jahweh" and "Elohim" respectively for God, and the "P" or priestly school. Possibly the "J" and "E" strains date from the 9th and 8th centuries and the "P" from the 3d centuries B.C., though estimates are contradictory.

The signet, which is a stamp seal ring, becomes an integral part of the story of Judah and Tamar. Judah tells his widowed daughter-in-law Tamar to live with her father until his son Shelah becomes of marriageable age. Eventually Judah's wife dies and his decision to visit his sheepshearers in Timnah is relayed to Tamar who, now that Shelah is mature, still has not been given to him as promised. She casts off her widow's clothes, puts on a veil and awaits Judah on the road. The latter, thinking her a harlot, says he will send her a kid for her favors.

> And she said, "Will you give me a pledge, till you send it?" He said, "What pledge shall I give you?" She replied, "Your signet and your cord, and your staff that is in your hand." (Gen: 38:17-18).

She conceives twins by him and the two depart, Judah ignorant of her real identity. He thereafter unsuccessfully searches for her in order to retrieve the pledge by giving the kid. Three months later he learns that Tamar had played a harlot.

> And Judah said, "Bring her out, and let her be burned." As she was being brought out, she sent word to her father-in-law, "By the man to whom these belong, I am with child." And she said, "Mark, I pray you, whose these are, the signet and the cord and the staff." Then Judah acknowledged them and said, "She is more righteous than I, inasmuch as I did not give her to my son Shelah." (Gen:38:24-26).

Tamar's twins became the brothers Perez and Zerah.

Book of Exodus:

Like Genesis, this book's oldest extant copies are the Dead Sea fragments

and the Sinaiticus and Vaticanus codices. It too was compiled from the three strains of "J", "E," and "P." It mentions signets three times in connection with commands by the Lord to Moses:

> "And you shall take two onyx stones, and engrave on them the names of the sons of Israel, six of their names on one stone, and the names of the remaining six on the other stone, in the order of their birth. As a jeweler engraves signets, so shall you engrave the two stones with the names of the sons of Israel; you shall enclose them in settings of gold filigree."
>
> (Exod:28:9-11).

The instructions continue:

> "There shall be twelve stones with their names according to the names of the sons of Israel; they shall be like signets, each engraved with its name, for the twelve tribes."
>
> (Exod:28:21).

And lastly Moses is told:

> "And you shall make a plate of pure gold, and engrave it, like the engraving of a signet, 'Holy to the Lord.' And you shall fasten it on the turban by a lace of blue; it shall be on the front of the turban."
>
> (Exod:28:36-37).

Book of Esther:

Since, of all Old Testament books, only Esther is not represented among the Qumrun cave fragments, the oldest copy of it remains the 4th century A.D. Codex Vaticanus. Its two references to seal printing concern the danger that Haman poses for the Jews. A high official at the court of Susa and angered by Mordecai's refusal to bow, Haman decides to destroy all Jews within the Persian empire as they are the people of Mordecai. Haman, telling King Ahasuerus that the Jews abid only by their own laws and not those of the king, thereby receives permission to deal with them:

> So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the Ag-

> agite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews. And the king said to Haman, "The money is given to you, the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you." Then the king's secretaries were summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and an edict, according to all that Haman commanded, was written to the king's satraps and to the governors over all the provinces and to the princes of all the peoples, to every province in its own script and every people in its own language; it was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king's ring.
>
> (Esth:3:10-12)

Ultimately, Esther, the Jewish wife of the king, successfully intercedes on behalf of her threatened people.

Book of Job:

The time frame of Job, which refers to the stamp seal, is perhaps 600-400 B.C., while the date of the poem's earliest version might be from the 2d century B.C.

Its unknown composer may have lived, 580-540 B.C. However, since the actors and stage of his work are set in Edom (the Idumea of the Greeks), a kingdom bordering Palestine or Canaan between the Dead Sea and the Aqaba gulf, there is the possibility that the poet may have been an Edomite. The autochthonous Edomites are believed to be of Horite (i.e. Hurrian) extraction, whose ultimate home has been traced back to Armenia. By 1300 B.C. they had established a fresh agrarian monarchy in Edom which in time was destroyed by the alien King David. Whether written by an Edomite or a Jew, the Book of Job is the longest continuous poem in the Hebrew scriptures, and perhaps betrays a certain Hurrian skepticism by its defiance of the view that justice is obtained on earth and its opposition to the contention that sin remains suffering's major source. At one point, Job announces:

> Truly I know that it is so:
> But how can a man be just before God?

If one wished to contend with him,
one could not answer him once
in a thousand times.
He is wise in heart, and mighty in
strength
---who has hardened himself against
him, and succeeded?---
he who removes mountains, and
they know it not,
when he overturns them in his
anger;
who shakes the earth out of its
place,
and its pillars tremble;
who commands the sun, and it does
not rise;
who seals up the stars;
who alone stretched out the heavens,
and trampled the waves of the
sea;
who made the Bear and Orion,
the Pleiades and the chambers
of the south;
who does great things beyond
understanding,
and marvelous things without
number.
Lo, he passes by me, and I see him
not;
he moves on, but I do not per-
ceive him.
Behold, he snatches away; who can
hinder him?
Who will say to him, 'What
doest thou'?
(Job:9:2-12).

The ability to own the stars by affixing a seal to them, an allusion to raw power, is good Mesopotamian custom. Indeed, the earliest known "Job" theme occurs in the Sumerian wisdom text, Lamentation to a Man's God, several thousand years before the Old Testament, and incorporates a rather common Sumerian idea: that the gods blend in evil and violence along with other ingredients as part of their recipe for civilization.

New Testament*

The original New Testament, probably written in Christ's language of Aramaic, survives in its earliest forms largely in Greek translation. Since

*All excerpts are from The Holy Bible, Revised Standard Version (New York: Thomas Nelson, 1953).

they were copied on papyrus, perishable without proper care, no whole manuscript of a gospel book is extant though certain sizeable remains may date two centuries after their original composition.

Book of Revelation:

While disagreement exists on the exact dates, geographic origin and authorship of all New Testament books, the possibility remains that the Book of Revelation, which contains 20 references to the stamp seal, may have been written about A.D. 95-96; that is, toward the end of the reign (81-96) of Roman Emperor Domitian. The contention of Justin Martyr (c. 100-165), a church father in Palestine, that Revelation was composed by the apostle John, has been critized. According to Papias, a bishop of Hieropolis in Asia Minor who lived during the late 1st and early 2d centuries, both John and his brother James were killed by the Jews in 70, more than two decades prior to the traditional date for Revelation.

More likely, the book's author, who also calls himself John in four verses, was not apostolic but instead connected to the church of Ephesus in Asia Minor. He may have been a Hebrew Christian with a substandard writing knowledge of Greek. The oldest Greek manuscript of Revelation, aside from a few papyrus fragments, is the 4th century Sinaiticus. Revelation contains a good deal of astrology, invented millennia earlier by the Sumerians and persisting amazingly enough through modern times as the world's oldest religion.

The stamp seal figures prominently in the book's description of the seven* seal visions witnessed by the author upon his heavenly visit, including

*Seven becomes a dynamic number in Revelation, a precedent established in the remote Near East especially among the ancient Caucasians and the later Semites who borrowed from them. Among Sumerians and Armenians, for utterly baffling reasons, seven was a fortunate number verging on the sacred. The Sumerian pantheon gives prominence to the Anunnaki, the seven attendant heaven gods and feared judges of the netherworld. Sumer's Nergal and Ereshkigal tale speaks of the seven gates and seven porters of the netherworld. The Myth of Zu, also Sumerian, refers to the Seven-of-the-Battle as the seven whirlwinds. The Story of King Idrimi of Alalakh, a Hurrian city-state on the Orontos river near the Mediterranean, relates that Barattarna, the powerful king of another Hurrian state, remained his enemy for seven years, and that Idrimi subsequently attacked seven Hittite citadels. And the Akkadian work, I Will Praise the Lord of Wisdom, describes the fear which the central figure holds for a particular group of seven enemies.

those passages depicting the four horsemen (Revelation remains one of literature's influential apocalyptic tracts). In elaborating on the heavenly throne, the writer utilizes the traditionally secular functions of the stamp to espouse his religious purposes:

> And I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals; and I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I wept much that no one was found worthy to open the scroll or to look into it. Then one of the elders said to me, "Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." (Rev:5:1-5).

A seven-horned, seven-eyed lamb,* representing the deity's seven spirits, is next described as receiving the scroll, as 48 elders and fabulous creatures, burst into song:

> "Worthy art thou to take the scroll
> and to open its seals,
> for thou wast slain and by thy blood
> didst ransom men for God
> from every tribe and tongue and
> people and nation,
> and hast made them a kingdom and
> priests to our God,
> and they shall reign on earth."
> (Rev:5:9-10).

The gradual opening of the seals, an integral part of the book, results in a series of calamities for humanity and the earth. Six seals are opened in rapid succession, the seventh after a literary pause. All, however, reflect the ancient Subaro-Sumerian view of the underlying inviolability of seal printing which, if disturbed, can result in punishment. Breaking of the first four seals, each identified with one of the four horsemen of the apocalypse (white, red, black and pale), generates war, slaughter, greed, famine and epidemic:

> Now I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals, and I heard one of the four living creatures say, as with a voice of thunder, "Come!" And I saw, and behold, a white horse, and its rider had a bow; and a crown was given to him, and he went out conquering and to conquer.

*In late Sumerian ritual songs, a lamb is occasionally identified as the substitute for humanity.

> When he opened the second seal, I heard the second living creature say, "Come!" And out came another horse, bright red; its rider was permitted to take peace from the earth, so that men should slay one another; and he was given a great sword.
>
> When he opened the third seal, I heard the third living creature say, "Come!" And I saw, and behold, a black horse, and its rider had a balance in his hand; and I heard what seemed to be a voice in the midst of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; but do not harm oil and wine!"
>
> When he opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth living creature say, "Come!" And I saw, and behold, a pale horse, and its rider's name was Death, and Hades followed him; and they were given power over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword and with famine and with pestilence and by wild beasts of the earth. (Rev:6:1-8).

The title of the book is inextricably connected to seal printing as breaking of the various seals elicits revelations of what happened, exists and is yet to occur. Opening the fifth seal presents a scene of the souls of martyrs beneath the heavenly altar requesting vengeance from the deity against those who persecuted them:

> When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the witness they had borne; they cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth?" Then they were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and their brethren should be complete, who were to be killed as they themselves had been. (Rev:6:9-11).

Breaking the sixth seal gives a picture of cosmic disturbances and earthly travails more ominous than the preceding seal openings and bound up with the horrible judgment on humanity:

> When he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale; the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the generals and the rich and the strong, and every one, slave and free, hid in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand before it?" (Rev.6:12-17).

Prior to concentration on the upcoming seventh seal, there follows a digression in which the stamp is cited six more times. Just as the older Sumerian deities possessed individual seals often corresponding to their

own sacred cities---Enki of Eridu, Enlil of Nippur, Nannar of Ur, Inanna of Uruk, Amarutu (Marduk) of Kadingira (Babylon)---so also does the Revelation deity, though without urban connection. This indicates a significant continuity in the use of the printing medium as a theological instrument over a period of three millennia, during which the imprint of the deity's seal emblem symbolizes the transformation of supernatural powers into temporal cognizance:

> After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth, that no wind might blow on earth or sea or against any tree. Then I saw another angel ascend from the rising of the sun, with the seal of the living God, and he called with a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm earth and sea, saying, "do not harm the earth or the sea or the trees, till we have sealed the servants of God upon their foreheads." And I heard the number of the sealed, a hundred and forty-four thousand sealed, out of every tribe of the sons of Israel, twelve thousand sealed out of the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand of the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand of the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand of the tribe of Asher, twelve thousand of the tribe of Naphtali, twelve thousand of the tribe of Manasseh, twelve thousand of the tribe of Simeon, twelve thousand of the tribe of Levi, twelve thousand of the tribe of Issachar, twelve thousand of the tribe of Zebulun, twelve thousand of the tribe of Joseph, twelve thousand sealed out of the tribe of Benjamin. (Rev:7:1-8).

Use of the seal on the forehead (a form of branding?) marks not only possession in the customary sense but initiation as well. Opening the seventh and final seal inaugurates yet another spate of woes, heralded by seven angels with trumpets:

> When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half and hour. Then I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. (Rev:8:1-2).

Cosmic and terrestrial disasters follow the seven trumpet blasts, the fifth incorporating a unique use of the stamp:

> Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given power like the power of scorpions of the earth; they were told not to harm the grass of the earth or any green growth or any tree, but only those of mankind who have not the seal of God upon their foreheads; they were allowed to torture them for five months, but not to kill them, and their torture was like the torture of a scorpion, when it stings a man. (Rev:9:3-5).

Use of printing in this citation by the author of Revelation is but a

variant of the Subaro-Sumerian concept which views the seal as a medium for official legitimization. Furthermore, imprint of the New Testament deity's seal on foreheads is requisite for protection from the human-hunting locusts. The old Mesopotamian legacy of seal printing as psychological, and ultimately physical protection, is readily apparent. The revelations resulting from the opening of the seven seals provide the most numerous as well as outstanding examples of the stamp in all biblical literature and serve to emphasize the persisting importance still associated with the printing devices invented by the Tigris-Euphrates people. Revelation offers yet another and final mention of the stamp:

> I John am he who heard and saw these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me; but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brethren the prophets, and with those who keep the words of this book. Worship God."
> And he said to me, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near." (Rev:22:8-9).

Koran*

Three of the 114 chapters or surahs ("pictures" in Arabian) of the Koran ("reading") allude to ancient printing. Considered by Moslems to have been dictated or revealed to Mohammed (A.D. 570-632) by the archangel and biblical divine messenger, Gabriel, Islam's sacred scriptures have additionally influenced the laws, politics and culture of many lands, And like the Bible, its oldest extant versions date considerably after the events depicted, in this instance several centuries.

Chapter of Al-Hijr:

This surah recalls the hardness of baked clay, one of the most durable materials from which seals were made and upon which they were often printed ever since earliest Subaro-Sumerian times. It additionally associates the medium to the marks and emblems appearing on the Caucasian invention.

*All excerpts are from Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, trans., The Meaning of the Glorious Koran (New York: Mentor, 1954).

Al-Hijr was revealed at Mecca, birth place of Mohammed and seat of Islam:

> By thy life (O Mohammed) they moved blindly in the frenzy of approaching death.
> Then the (Awful) Cry overtook them at the sunrise.
> And We utterly confounded them, and We rained upon them stones of heated clay.
> Lo! therein verily are portents for those who read signs.
> (Surah XV:72-75).

Chapter of Ar-Rum:

Also revealed at Mecca, Ar-Rum ("Romans") contains figurative citations. Coinage, as metal stamp printing, here implies "engraved" or "stamped," while seal refers to "finalization" as in a transaction which in Sumerian times was consummated by seal printing:

> Verily We have coined for mankind in the Koran all kinds of similitudes; and if indeed if thou camest unto them with a miracle, those who disbelieve would verily exclaim: Ye are but tricksters!
> Thus doth Allah seal the hearts of those who know not.
> So have patience (O Mohammed)! Allah's promise is the very truth, and let not those who have no certainty make thee impatient.
> (surah XXX:58-60).

Chapter of At-Taubah:

Dictated at Medina, where Mohammed was initially accepted as Allah's main prophet and site of his tomb, At-Taubah ("Repentance") at one point reflects among the oldest of Caucasian printing variations: namely, stamping on flesh (either animal or human) the insignia or mark of the branding or printing instrument as evidence of ownership or as the taboo of the pariah:

> O ye who believe! Lo! many of the (Jewish) rabbis and the (Christian) monks devour the wealth of mankind wantonly and debar (men) from the way of Allah. They who hoard up gold and silver and spend it not in the way of Allah, unto them give tidings (O Mohammed) of a painful doom.
> On the day when it will (all) be heated in the fire of hell, and their foreheads and their flanks and their backs will be branded therewith (and it will be said unto them): Here is that which ye hoarded for yourselves. Now taste of what ye used to hoard.
> (surah IX:34-35).

Arabian Nights

The bulk of the Thousand Nights and a Night (Alf Laylah wa Layla) derive from Caucasian, Mesopotamian, Arabian, Persian and Indian tales and poetry

and perhaps were gathered under the patronage of Harun-al-Rashid (766-809) while he was Caliph of Baghdad (786-809). The compilation refers to printing by seal on 15 occasions during seven of the nights.

When it was the Twenty-Fourth Night:

The citation herein conveys the broad use of sealing as a guarantee against poison. Food thus stamped indicated that protective procedures had been undertaken:

> Hasan of Bassorah laughed and answered, "By Allah, none can dress this dish as it should be dressed save myself and my mother, and she at this time is in a far country." Then he ladled out a saucer-full and, finishing it off with musk and rose-water, put it in a cloth which he sealed, and gave it to the Eunuch, who hastened back with it.[26]

When it was the One Hundred and Sixty-First Night:

Sealing early letters written on clay and parchment as well as paper was customarily accomplished by signet-ring or a special stamp worn on a necklace. Sometimes multiple sealing became habitual---though one wonders how recipients could be fooled if the insignia was well-known unless counterfeiting was practiced---as reflected in the following excerpt:

> So he gave her the letter and she took it and sealed it up as it was before, saying, "My mistress Shams al-Nahar gave it to me sealed; and when he hath read it and given me its reply, I will bring it to thee." Then she took leave and repaired to Ali bin Bakkar, whom she found waiting, and gave him the letter. He read it and writing a paper by way of reply, gave it to her; and she carried it to the jeweller, who tore asunder the seal and read it...[27]

When it was the Four Hundred and Thirty-Third Night:

So authoritative was the stamp mark that making a law "binding" on all could only be officialized by affixing of the necessary personal seal:

> So the King said, "O Kazi, draw up a legal instrument testifying of these Emirs that they are agreed to make King over them my daughter's husband Hasan." The Kazi wrote the act and made it binding on all men, after they had sworn in a body the oath of fealty to Hasan.[28]

When it was the Five Hundred and Fourteenth Night:

Because of a tradition that Mohammed's favorite material for the bezel of a signet-ring was carnelian, many such Islamic stamping devices were manufactured

from it to induce good fortune:

> Moreover let thy signet-ring be made of carnelian because it is a guard against poverty.[29]

When it was the Five Hundred and Twenty-Sixth Night:

Just as the ancient Egyptian stamp seal acquired charm qualities when adopting the scarab form, so too did the signet-ring in later ages supposedly provide its wearers with good luck in addition to its traditional printing function. In reality, therefore, the magic ring of legend was a signet:

> Now when the Moorman ended his charge to Alaeddin, he drew off a seal-ring and put it on the lad's forefinger saying, "O my son, verily this signet shall free thee from all hurt and fear which may threaten thee, but only on condition that thou bear in mind all I have told thee. So arise straightway and go down the stairs, strengthening thy purpose and girding the loins of resolution: moreover fear not for thou art now a man and no longer a child. And in shortest time, O my son, thou shalt win thee immense riches and thou shalt become the wealthiest of the world."[30]

When it was the Six Hundred and Fifty-Third Night:

So pertinent a sign of sovereignty became the seal-ring that its loss, and thereby potential interruption of certain administrative functions dependant on such a badge of official authenticity, could generate much consternation:

> And as the King rode along with a heavy hand upon the reigns he grasped them strongly and his fist closed upon them; but suddenly he relaxed his grip when his seal-ring flew from his little finger and fell into the water, where it sank to the bottom. Seeing this the Sultan drew bridle and halted and said, "We will on no wise remove from this place till such time as my seal-ring shall be restored to me." So the suite dismounted, one and all, and designed plunging into the stream, when behold, the Fakir finding the King standing alone and in woeful plight by cause of his signet asked him saying, "What is to do with thee, O King of the Age, that I find thee here halted?" He replied, "Verily my signet-ring of Kingship hath dropped from me into the river somewhere about this place." Quoth the Darwaysh, "Be not grieved, O our lord;" after which he brought out from his breast pocket a pencase, and having drawn from it a bit of bees' wax, he fashioned it into the form of a man and cast it into the water. Then he stood gazing thereat when, lo and behold! the Figure came forth the river with the seal-ring hanging to its neck and sprang when the Form jumped off and approached the Darwaysh who hent the ring in hand and rubbed it and the Figure at once became wax as it had been. Hereupon the Darwaysh restored it to his pencase and said to the Sovran, "Now do thou ride on!"[31]

When it was the Seven Hundred and Fifty-Ninth Night:

Among numerous legends concerning seal-rings was that associated with the

so-called oath---based upon the words, "the saving faith"---made upon the signet of Solomon. That seal-ring comprised four gems given by four angels (representing winds, birds, earth-sea, spirits). And the stones were engraved with four sentences: "To Allah belong Majesty and Might," "All created things praise the Lord," "Heaven and Earth are Allah's slaves," and "There is no god but the God and Mohammed is His Messenger." Allusion to the seal-ring oath follows:

> Meanwhile Allah (extolled and exalted be He!) inspired Solomon the son of David (the Peace be upon both!) and said to him, "O Solomon, the King of Egypt sendeth unto thee his Chief Wazir, with a present of rarities and such and such things of price; so do thou also dispatch thy Counsellor Asaf bin Barkhiya to meet him with honour and with victual at the halting-places; and when he cometh to thy presence, say unto him, 'Verily, thy King hath sent thee in quest of this and that and thy business is thus and thus.' Then do thou propound to him The Saving Faith."[32]

Canterbury Tales*

Even medieval England, at the far end of the world in time and distance, witnessed two citations to seal printing in the Canterbury Tales, composed about 1386 by Geoffrey Chaucer. In his Prologue of the Pardoner's Tale, printing reflects one of its ancient roles as protector of property and person:

> "First I announce the place whence I have come,
> And then I show my pardons, all and some.
> Our liege-lord's seal on my patent perfect,
> I show that first, my safety to protect,
> And then no man's so bold, no priest nor clerk,
> As to disturb me in Christ's holy work;
> And after that my tales I marshal all."
> (7-13).

And in the Wife of Bath's Prologue, Chaucer associates the lively heroine with the printing instrument of the goddess of beauty:

> "Gap-toothed I was, and that became me well;
> I had the print of holy Venus' seal."
> (615-616)

Shakespeare**

Though other medieval and later European writers made reference to seal printing, it is with William Shakespeare that such becomes commonplace and on

*All quotations are from J.U. Nicolson, ed., Canterbury Tales (Garden City: Garden City Pub. Co., 1934).

**All excerpts are from George Lyman Kittredge, ed., The Complete Works of Shakespeare (Boston: Ginn, 1936).

a scale seldom matched in aesthetic breadth. His numerous citations vary from the traditional linking of seal printing to commercial and legal transactions and identification marks to symbolic protection and closing of doors and mouths.

3 King Henry VI:

Completed in 1591, this play at one point has the Duke of Clarence say to King Edward:

> The duty I owe unto your Majesty
> I seal upon the lips of this sweet babe.
> (V:vii:28-29)

Titus Andronicus:

One bloodthirsty episode in this drama, written in 1592, witnesses the Nurse addressing Aaron in no uncertain terms:

> A joyless, dismal, black, and sorrowful issue!
> Here is the babe, as loathsome as a toad
> Amongst the fairest breeders of our clime.
> The Empress sends it thee, thy stamp, thy seal,
> And bids thee christen it with thy dagger's point.
> (IV:ii:66-70)

Richard III:

Also completed in 1592, this play has Queen Margaret complain to the Marquess of Dorset that maturity---here symbolized by the seal---might prove more valuable than lack of seasoning:

> Peace, master Marquess, you are malapert.
> Your fire-new stamp of honour is scarce current.
> O that your young nobility could judge
> What 'twere to lost it and be miserable!
> They that stand high have many blasts to shake them,
> And if they fall, they dash themselves to pieces.
> (I:iii:255-260)

Midsummer Night's Dream:

In lighter vein, Shakespeare in 1595 has the awakening Demetrius proclaim:

> O Helen, goddess, nymph, perfect, divine!
> To what, my love, shall I compare thine eyne?
> Crystal is muddy. O, how ripe in show
> Thy lips, those kissing cherries, tempting grow!
> That pure congealed white, high Taurus' snow,
> Fann'd with the eastern wind, turns to a crow
> When thou hold'st up thy hand. O, let me kiss
> This princess of pure white, this seal of bliss!
> (III:ii:137-144)

Romeo and Juliet:

Also finished in 1595, the Italian-based love tragedy contains a passage which reiterates the old stamp habit, harking back to Sumerian times, of symbolically securing a portal beyond merely locking it. Friar John speaks to Friar Laurence:

> Going to find a barefoot brother out,
> One of our order, to associate me
> Here in this city visiting the sick,
> And finding him, the searchers of the town,
> Suspecting that we both were in a house
> Where the infectious pestilence did reign,
> Seal'd up the doors, and would not let us forth,
> So that my speed to Mantua there was stay'd.
> (V:ii:5-12)

Merchant of Venice:

In no other play does Shakespeare cite seal printing as often (eight times) as in this story which openly concerns commerce. Obviously, the long-time relationship of the seal to trade may have encouraged such treatment in this 1596 creation. The first reference is when Portia addresses Nerissa:

> That he hath a neighbourly charity in
> him; for he borrowed a box of the ear of the
> Englishman, and swore he would pay him again
> when he was able. I think the Frenchman be-
> came his surety and seal'd under for another.
> (I:ii:85-89)

Later follow three consecutive statements by Shylock, Antonio and Bassanio:

Shylock:
> This kindness will I show.
> Go with me to a notary, seal me there
> your single bond; and, in a merry sport
> If you repay me not on such a day,
> In such a place, such sum or sums as are
> Express'd in the condition, let the forfeit
> Be nominated for an equal pound
> Of your fair flesh, to be cut off and taken
> In what part of your body pleaseth me.

Antonio:
> Content in faith. I'll seal to such a bond,
> And say there is much kindness in the Jew.

Bassanio:
> You shall not seal to such a bond for me!
> I'll rather dwell in my necessity.
> (I:iii:144-156)

Shortly thereafter Antonio re-emphasizes his assent:

> Yes, Shylock, I will seal unto this bond.
> (I:iii:172)

Eventually in a scene between Portia and one of her suitors, the Prince of Morocco, Shakespeare for the first time in any of his plays specifically uses the term "coin," a product of printing by stamp on metal. If the Prince can guess which among three caskets (one gold, one silver, one lead) contains Portia's picture, he shall win her:

> Morocco:
> Or shall I think in silver she's immur'd,
> Being ten times undervalued to tried gold?
> O sinful thought! Never so rich a gem
> Was set in worse than gold. They have in
> England
> A coin that bears the figure of an angel
> Stamped in gold---but that's insculp'd upon;
> But here an angel in a golden bed
> Lies all within. Deliver me the key.
> Here do I choose, and thrive I as I may!
> (II:vii:52-60)

In picking the golden one, however, the Prince errs and thereby loses Portia, to her satisfaction. Lastly, much later in the play, Shylock announces to Gratiano:

> Till thou canst rail the seal from off my bond,
> Thou but offend'st thy lungs to speak so loud.
> Repair thy wit, good youth, or it will fall
> To cureless ruin. I stand here for law.
> (IV:i:139-142)

I King Henry IV:

In this play of 1597, shakespeare speaks of printing seven times, second in quantity only to Merchant of Venice. Six of the occasions occur in a light episode set at the Boar's Head Tavern, Eastcheap, with Sir John Falstaff, the Hostess and Bardolph initially present:

> Hostess:
> Now, as I am a true woman, holland of
> eight shillings an ell. You owe money here be-
> sides, Sir John, for your diet and by-drinkings,
> and money lent you, four-and-twenty pound.

Falstaff:
He had his part of it; let him pay.
Hostess:
He? Alas, he is poor; he hath nothing.
Falstaff:
How? Poor? Look upon his face.
What call you rich? Let them coin his nose, let
them coin his cheeks. I'll not pay a denier.
What, will you make a younker of me? Shall I
not take mine ease in mine inn but I shall have
my pocket pick'd? I have lost a seal-ring of my
grandfather's worth forty mark.
Hostess:
O Jesu, I have heard the Prince tell
him, I know not how oft, that that ring was
copper!
Falstaff:
How? the Prince is a Jack, a sneak-cup.
'Sblood, an he were here, I would cudgel him
like a dog if he would say so.
(III:iii:82-101)

Henry, the Prince of Wales, thereupon enters the tavern:

Prince:
What didst thou lose, Jack?
Falstaff:
Wilt thou believe me, Hal? Three or
four bonds of forty pound apiece and a seal-ring
of my grandfather's.
(III:iii:115-118)

The Prince subsequently learns from the Hostess of Falstaff's earlier threat to strike him if the latter had actually doubted the seal-ring's value:

Falstaff:
Yea, if he said my ring was copper.
Prince:
I say 'tis copper. Darest thou be as
good as thy word now?
(III:iii:162-164)

Fortunately, Falstaff is saved by the Prince's tolerant nature. The seventh allusion to printing occurs further on when Falstaff and Bardolph meet on a public road near Coventry:

Falstaff:
Bardolph, get thee before to Coventry;
fill me a bottle of sack. Our soldiers shall march
through. We'll to Sutton Co'fil' to-night.
Bardolph:
Will you give me money, Captain?
Falstaff:
Lay out, lay out.

Bardolph:
This bottle makes an angel.
Falstaff:
An if it do, take it for thy labour; an
if it make twenty, take them all; I'll answer
the coinage. Bid my lieutenant Peto meet me
at town's end.
(IV:ii:1-10)

Merry Wives of Windsor:

In this drama of 1600, Shakespeare refers first to stamped metal ingots, which were used since Sumerian days and subsequently evolved into coinage, and then to protecting them in containers sealed by stamp printing to assure their inviolability, also a Sumerian tradition. Fenton speaks to Anne Page:

No, heaven so speed me in my time to come!
Albeit I will confess thy father's wealth
Was the first motive that I woo'd thee, Anne;
Yet, wooing thee, I found thee of more value
Than stamps in gold or sums in sealed bags;
And 'tis the very riches of thyself that now I aim at.
(III:iv:12-17)

Hamlet:

This tragedy, possibly completed in 1600 or 1601, cites stamp printing on metal as a synonym for duplication or reproduction in a scene between Hamlet and the Queen in the latter's closet:

Queen:
To whom do you speak this?
Hamlet:
Do you see nothing there?
Queen:
Nothing at all; yet all that is I see.
Hamlet:
Nor did you nothing hear?
Queen:
No, nothing but ourselves.
Hamlet:
Why, look you there! Look how it
steals away!
My father, in his habit as he liv'd!
Look where he goes even now out at the portal!
Exit Ghost.
Queen:
This is the very coinage of your brain.
This bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in.
(III:iv:131-138)

Measure for Measure:

Equal to I King Henry IV and thereby second solely to Merchant of Venice in frequency of allusions to seal printing is this play of 1604. Shakespeare cites it seven times. In an early passage Isabella, sister of Claudio, speaks with Angelo, the Deputy, who has sentenced her brother to death:

Isabella:
When, I beseech you? that in his reprieve,
Longer or shorter, he may be so fitted
That his soul sicken not.

Angelo:
Ha! fie, these filthy vices! It were as good
To pardon him that hath from nature stol'n
A man already made, as to remit
Their saucy sweetness that do coin heaven's image
In stamps that are forbid. 'Tis all as easy
Falsely to take away a life true made
As to put metal in restrained means
To make a false one.
(II:iv:39-49)

Later, Marianna enters while the Boy sings:

Take, O, take those lips away
That so sweetly were forsworn;
And those eyes, the break of day,
Lights that do mislead the morn;
But my kisses bring again, bring again;
Seals of love, but seal'd in vain, seal'd in vain.
(IV:i:1-6)

Finally, Vicentio, the Duke of Vienna, speaks to the Provost:

Not a resemblance, but a certainty.
Yet since I see you fearful, that neither my
coat, integrity, nor persuasion can with ease
attempt you, I will go further than I meant, to
pluck all fears out of you. Look you, sir, here
is the hand and seal of the Duke. You know
the character, I doubt not, and the signet is not
strange to you.
(IV:ii:203-209)

Macbeth:

Necklaces featuring stamp seals were worn not only by the Subaro-Sumerians but also by the later Egyptians who transformed them into the scarab shape.

In this tragedy of 1606, Shakespeare cites the old custom when Malcolm addresses Macduff:

> 'Tis call'd the evil:
> A most miraculous work in this good king,
> *Which often since my here-remain in England*
> I have seen him do. How he solicits heaven
> Himself best knows; but strangely-visited people,
> All swol'n and ulcerous, pitiful to the eye,
> The mere despair of surgery, he cures,
> Hanging a golden stamp about their necks,
> Put on with holy prayers; and 'tis spoken,
> To the succeeding royalty he leaves
> The healing benediction. With this strange virtue,
> He hath a heavenly gift of prophecy,
> And sundry blessings hang about his throne
> That speak him full of grace.
>
> (IV:iii:147-158)

Coriolanus:

This tragedy concerning the Roman hero was written in 1608 and contains two references to printing on metal by stamp. The first occurs in a conversation between Coriolanus and the First Roman Senator:

> First Senator:
> No more words, we beseech you.
> Coriolanus:
> How? No more?
> As for my country I have shed much blood,
> Not fearing outward force, so shall my lungs
> Coin words till their decay against those
> measles
> Which we disdain should tetter us, yet sought
> The very way to catch them.
>
> (III:i:74-79)

The second arises in a public place in Rome when Menenius Agrippa, Coriolanus' friend, speaks to Velutus, a Tribune of the People:

> Menenius:
> See you yond coign o' th' Capitol,
> yond cornerstone?
> Sicinius:
> Why, what of that?
> Menenius:
> If it be possible for you to displace it
> with your little finger, there is some hope the
> ladies of Rome, especially his mother, may
> prevail with him. But I say there is no hope
> in't. Our throats are sentenc'd and stay upon
> execution.
>
> (V:iv:1-8)

King Henry VIII:

The seal is mentioned three times in this play of 1613. In the detailed introduction to scene II, act iv, occuring in a hall in Blackfriars, London, Shakespeare writes:

> Trumpets, sennet, and cornets. Enter two Vergers, with short, silver wands; next them, two Scribes, in the habit of Doctors; after them, the (Arch) bishop of Canterbury alone; after him, the Bishops of Lincoln, Ely, Rochester, and Saint Asaph; next them, with some small distance, follows a Gentleman bearing the purse, with the great seal, and a Cardinal's hat; then two Priests, bearing each a silver cross; then a Gentleman Usher bareheaded, accompanied with a Sergeant-at-arms bearing a silver mace; then two Gentlemen bearing two great silver pillars; after them, side by side, the two Cardinals, (Wolsey and Camperius) two Noblemen with the sword and mace. The King takes place under the cloth of state; the two Cardinals sit under him as Judges. The Queen takes place some distance from the King. The Bishops place themselves on each side the court, in a manner of a consistory; below them, the Scribes. The Lords sit next the Bishops. The rest of the Attendants stand in convenient order about the stage.

Subsequently in the same scene, Henry makes the pronouncement:

> I then moved you,
> My Lord of Canterbury, and got your leave
> To make this present summons. Unsolicited
> I left no reverend person in this court,
> But by particular consent proceeded
> Under your hands and seals. Therefore go on;
> For no dislike i' th' world against the person
> Of the good Queen, but the sharp thorny points
> Of my alleged reasons, drives this forward.
> Prove but our marriage lawful, by my life
> And kingly dignity, we are contented
> To wear our mortal state to come with her,
> Katherine our queen, before the primest creature
> That's paragon'd o' th' world.
> (II: iv:217-229)

Finally, in another act, equating a seal with a high emblem of authority is explicit when the Duke of Norfolk addresses Cardinal Wolsey:

> And so we'll leave you to your meditations
> How to live better, For your stubborn answer
> About the giving back the great seal to us,
> The King shall know it, and (no doubt) shall thank you.
> So fare you well, my little good Lord Cardinal.
> (III:ii:345-349)

Though the engraving contents on the vast majority of the seals in the foregoing literary citations from the Sumerian works through Shakespeare remain unknown, certain presumptions can be attempted. Family insignias (mostly royalty) or outright heraldry likely figured in the printing impressions of the Sumerian and Greek works. In Sumerian society, parties to a contract traditionally used seals---doubtless quite elaborate as they were cylinders---for identification purposes which also became signatures. In Homeric times, stamp seals probably contained either the emblems of Troy and the Greek city-states respectively or the royal arms of the warring houses of Priam and Atreus. Since Aeschylus writes about a descendant of Atreus, the seal of Agamemnon probably contained his dynastic emblem.

Stamp seals of the Egyptian (perhaps mostly scarabs) and biblical works may have contained impressions serving to identify supernatural forces. Seals of the Koran and Arabian Nights might have differed considerably. Those of the former could not have contained human illustrations as such would be in opposition to the Moslem religion. The Thousand Nights and a Night, however linked to religion on the surface, are largely secular in tone and as such their seals may well have exhibited numerous engravings of humans and animals. And lastly, the seals of the English writers likely contained heraldic engravings. Thus, for at least four millennia, the Subaro-Sumerian invention was not forgotten in the creative endeavors of the world's writers.

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[3]Stanley D. Walters, Water for Larsa: An Old Babylonian Archive Dealing with Irrigation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 186-187.

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[20]Sjöberg and Bergmann, "The Collection of the Sumerian Temple Hymns," p. 20.

[21]Ibid. p. 66.

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[27] Ibid., vol. III, p. 189.

[28] Ibid. vol. V, p. 184.

[29] Richard F. Burton, trans., Supplemental Arabian Nights (USA: privately printed by the Burton Club, no date), vol. V, p. 38.

[30] Ibid., vol. V., p. 48.

[31] Ibid., Vol. V, p. 85.

[32] Burton, The Book of the Thousand Nights and A Night, vol. VII, p. 317.